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Plain Jane

Text by G. M. George

ILLUSTRATED
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That model Miss, Jemima Jane
Was very good, and very plain;
Her parents noticed with delight
How neat she was, and how polite.
Sometimes her young companions came
And begged she'd join them in a game.
But it was never any use;
She'd make some civil, quiet excuse,
And, "Dear Mama," she'd whisp'ring say,
"I love plain sewing more than play;
I hope you'll always think of me
As your own gentle, busy Bee!"
Jane rose at five. "What for?" you ask;
And I reply, "To con her task."
She breakfasted on milk and bread,
Nor ever asked for aught instead;
"I like it best, because," said she,
"'Tis wholesome for a child like me."
She used to think it quite a treat,
To put her bed and chamber neat;
But she enjoyed—oh, better far!
Saying her tasks to her Mama.

Jane's Uncle

She took the air when these were done,
But she would never romp and run;
Prim and sedate she walked about,
Her back quite straight, her toes turned out:
And all the people, seeing this,
Exclaimed, "Oh, what a model Miss!"
Jane's Uncle, who lived far away,
Sent her Mama a note one day,
Explaining that he found he had
To spend a fortnight in Bagdad.
He had a daughter, and 'twas plain
He hoped that she might stay with Jane.
"She's a sad puss," he said, "I own;
But I can't leave the child alone."
"I think," Mama said, in a fuss,
"We can't have *her* to stay with us:
I do not like my Jane to mix
With children who have naughty tricks."
But Jane said, with a gentle smile,
Plying her needle all the while,
"Pray, let her come here, dear Mama,
With the permission of Papa;
I have a hope that she might be
Influenced for her good by me:
For I could show her that she would
Be happier if she were good."

"She bought a rod that afternoon"

"Ann was brought there by a serving man"

At this her kind Mama relented,
And, as her good Papa consented,
That very day her mother wrote
Her uncle quite a cordial note,
Saying, "I think that it is clear
Your Ann should spend your absence here"
As she expected Ann quite soon,
She bought a rod that afternoon.
And sure enough, next Tuesday, Ann
Was brought there by a serving-man.
Alas! alas! it soon was plain
She was not in the least like Jane!
She ran and laughed and romped about,
And raised a hubbub and a shout.
"Oh, fie!" said Jane, "Pray, cousin Ann,
Do be more tranquil if you can."
But Ann just laughed, and did not care,
And tweaked her cousin by the hair.

When they were out she climbed a tree,
Which quite annoyed the "busy Bee."
"Fie, fie!" she cried. Ann said "Here goes:"
And aimed an acorn at her nose!
So Jane replied, "My good Mama
Shall know how rude and rough you are."
"Your good Mama!" said little Ann;
"Well, if you want to tell, you can."
She went away—went whistling too,
Such a rude, boyish thing to do!

"Aimed an acorn at her nose"

"'*Indeed*, indeed, *I would much rather not proceed*'"

They went home shortly after, so
Jane told Mama her tale of woe.
"I do not tell this tale from choice,"
She said, in her most gentle voice;
"I thought you ought to know, you see,
How cousin Ann climbed up a tree;
And when I chid in gentle fashion,
She flew into a dreadful passion,
And—dear Mama, indeed, *indeed*,
I would much rather not proceed."
But since her mother thought it best,
She dutifully told the rest.
—"She threw things at me, tore my hair,
And *whistled* as she left me there!"

At this Mama looked grim and stern,
And said that Ann had much to learn;
And that she really felt unable
To have such naughty girls at table.
So when the others supped that day
(Their stew smelt sav'ry by the way),
Ann had to stand upon a seat,
And did not get a thing to eat;
While Jane kept slyly peeping round,
And swallowed with a sucking sound.
And there poor Ann was forced to stay
When supper was all cleared away.
Jane's good Papa began to read
A very solid book indeed;
Jane took her work, and sat near by,
And pricked Ann's ankles on the sly.

"Pricked Ann's ankles on the sly"

"Laughed at her look of pained surprise"

And there in fact Ann had to wait
Until the clock was striking eight,
When Jane's Mama believed it time
To say that ladies never climb,
But that to fall into a pet,
And fight, is more disgraceful yet!
Her little loving, gentle Jane
Should not be treated so again.
She added more. At last she said
Ann might come down, and go to bed.
Jane gently whispered, "Dear, you would
Be happier if you were good."
Ann mutter'd "Pig!"—but no one heard
Her use that most improper word.
It chanced that nearly every day
The cousins quarrelled at their play.
Good little Janie always ran
And told Mama of naughty Ann;
—Of how she tied Jane's flaxen hair
To the back portion of her chair,
And when her cousin tried to rise,
Laughed at her look of pained surprise.

How she had torn Jane's Sunday skirt,
And squirted at her with a squirt!
—And how another evening, she
Slipped salt into Jane's dish of tea;
And many another naughty feat
Did Ann perform and Jane repeat.
When Ann called Jane a "Tell-tale-tit,"
She went and told Mama of it.
She sighed, "I wondered how she *could!*
I long to help her to be good."
Jane's kind Mama, I need not say,
Behaved in the most prudent way;
Correcting Ann in various ways
And giving Jane much well-earned praise.

"Slipped salt into Jane's dish of tea"

"Off she started at a run"

Now in that village, every year
The people held a cattle fair ;
And stalls and tents and swings were seen
Set up upon the village green.
Now when the fair came round that spring
Ann longed to go like anything.
"Oh, Aunt," she cried, "do let us go!"
And pouted when her Aunt said "No."
Next morning when out walking, Ann
Concocted such a naughty plan!
She had some money of her own,
And she would see the fair alone!
(I hope no other little miss
Has ever made a scheme like this.)
When she believed that no one saw,
She slipped out at the big front door,
And off she started at a run,
To see the shows and all the fun.
Now little Jane sat prim and neat
Upon the parlour window seat ;

And so she saw her cousin go,
And guessed she meant to see the show.
"Mama!" she murmured, with a sigh,
"My cousin Ann has just run by;
I sadly fear—but no! oh, no!
It could not be to see the show."
Mama at once sent Betsy out
To see what Ann could be about:
And Betsy found her at the fair
Watching a big performing bear;
And Betsy brought her to her Aunt,
Altho' she fought and cried "I shan't!
I shan't go back! I won't go in!"
—And kicked poor Betsy on the shin.

"Watching a big performing bear"

"Jane fetched the rod"

Her Aunt, on hearing all, looked grave,
And said, "Is this how you behave?
You disobeyed me, and you fought!
—Go, Jane, and fetch the rod I bought."
Jane joyfully laid down her book,
And ran off with a merry look;
While Ann stood looking pale and queer,
And wishing that "Papa were here."

"Miss, to your room!" Mama said; so
Away poor Ann was forced to go.
Jane fetched the rod, and said, "Oh, why
Will my poor cousin be so sly?
I cannot bear," the child confessed
"To see my dear Mama distressed."
Mama then took the rod, and went,
Leaving her daughter well content:
Jane's gentle smile grew quite sublime,
For her Mama was gone some time.

"Jane's gentle smile grew quite sublime"

"Hot and tired"

When twenty minutes had expired
She came in looking hot and tired;
And very shortly after, she
Went out to drink a dish of tea
With several friends she long had known,
Leaving her little girl alone.
Jane found it rather dull to read;
She soon felt very dull indeed.
How interesting Ann's tales had been
About that circus she had seen.
Jane wished Mama had let them go
And see this cattle fair and show.
She almost thought it would be fun
To go alone, as Ann had done.

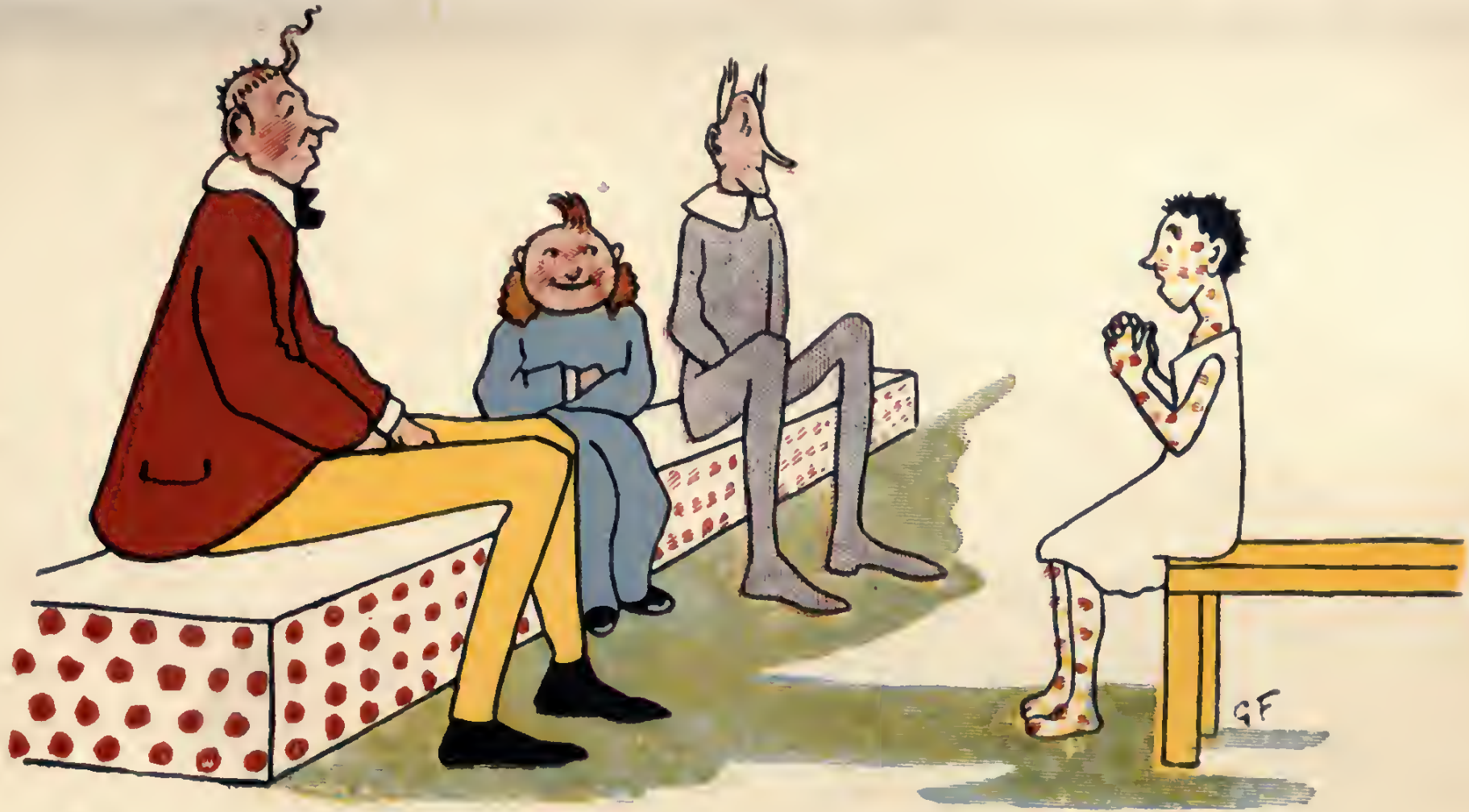
" 'Twill be her fault, if I *do* go ;
She made me want to see the show.
Mama will not suspect the plan
Because I told her about Ann,"
She said, as she decided on it,
And went to fetch her beaver bonnet.
Betsy the maid was busy, so
Nobody saw Miss Janie go.
Prim and particular and neat
She minced along the village street,
And safely reached the village green
Unnoticed, and in fact unseen.
Once there, Miss Jane, I grieve to say,
Behaved in quite a naughty way !
—She even rode a wooden horse,
Though with propriety, of course ;
She bought some sweetmeats at a stall
And then sat down and ate them all ;
She saw the clowns and acrobats,
And the performing dogs and cats.
She thought them very clever, yet
The pig-faced lady was her pet !

"With propriety"

"A woman saw her tears"

Soon it grew dark, and little Jane
Began to feel some drops of rain;
Her gown would spot, if it got wet;
And what a whipping she would get
If kind Mama could ferret out
What her dear child had been about.
If she got wet, they'd ask her "Why?"—
And here poor Jane began to cry.
A woman saw her tears—and saw
The pretty necklace which she wore.
"Come, come!" she said, "my little Miss,
Don't spoil your pretty eyes like this;
If you're afraid of getting wet
Come to my caravan, my pet,
And I'll be proud if Miss will take
A dish of tea and slice of cake."
Jane thought the woman kind and nice,
And so she followed her advice:
But after she had drunk her tea
She felt as drowsy as could be,
And so, although she tried to keep
Awake, she soon was fast asleep.

When she awoke, her head felt fit
To fall to pieces, and to split;
Her necklace and her clothes were gone,
And she had next to nothing on.
Her hair was short, and was—alack!
No longer fair, but bluish black!
And she herself was—only think!
Spotted all over brown and pink!
Too scared to cry, she rose and saw
A giant, dwarf, and several more.
In fact, it soon was pretty plain
These wicked men had stolen Jane,
And meant to use her as a show,
Dressed as a "spotted child," you know.
She struggled hard to be polite;
"Pray, sirs," she asked, "can this be right?"
"You 'old your bloomin' row!" they said,
And rudely cuffed her on the head.



"'Pray, sirs,' she asked, 'can this be right?'"

"Quite fond of Ann"

When Jane's Mama at length returned,
How dreadful was the news she learned!
Her child was gone!—And it was vain
To seek and search and call for Jane!
They hunted for her everywhere—
They even sought her at the fair;
But days went by, and then a week,
So that it seemed no use to seek.
Oddly enough—Mama began
Really to feel quite fond of Ann,
Now that there was no virtuous Jane
To carry tales and to complain.
And Ann felt sorry for her Aunt
Altho' she said: "I really can't
Conceive why it should cause her pain
To lose a little pig like Jane!"
Now that Ann's Aunt was left in peace
She made excuses for her niece;
If she were noisy at her play,
She said, "I like to see her gay."
And if she grew a trifle wild,
She only shook her head and smiled.

When Ann's Papa returned, one day,
And came to fetch his child away,
Mama was grieved to lose her niece,
And proffered her a guinea-piece,
Saying: "You must stay longer, when
You come to visit me again."
Now all this time, poor Jane, we know,
Was made a laughing-stock and show.
They told her, did she dare explain
That she was only little Jane,
And not a spotted girl at all,
They'd beat her till she couldn't crawl.
She had to wait on all the rest,
And had to do her very best;

"Proffered her a guinea-piece"

"She had to wait on all the rest"

So that, she sometimes quite forgot
Whether her back was straight or not!
And even, so the story goes,
Sometimes forgot to point her toes!
Jane found the children in the van
Were infinitely worse than Ann;
They punched her head and tore her hair,
And pinched and nipped her everywhere,
And when she said, "A little child
Ought to be tractable and mild!"
They only made an ugly face,
And pinched her in another place.
After a time this seemed to teach
Jane it was better not to preach:
And even now and then, she would
Forget that she was very good.
She wished it had not been her plan
Always to tell Mama of Ann.
After two months had passed away,
She even might be heard to say
That she had been a spiteful cat
To treat her Cousin Ann like that!

Now Jane's good parents went to stay
With Ann's Papa one autumn day;
And while they both were staying there,
The people held a kind of fair.
"Pray, brother," Jane's Mama began,
"Do let me take your little Ann;
For she would like to see the show."
And he replied, "We all might go."
And so that afternoon they went,
And gravely passed from tent to tent;
And finally, the party stept
Into the tent where freaks where kept.

"Gravely passed from tent to tent"

"And threw her arms round little Ann"

"Look at that child," said one, "I'm sure
Her spots are paint and nothing more."
Cried Ann: "I do not care a fig
For looking at that spotted pig!"
But at her voice, Jane shrieked and ran,
And threw her arms round little Ann.
"Save me! oh, save me!" she did plead;
"I'm not a spotted pig, indeed!"

While her Mama screamed out, "You're not
My Jane!"—and fainted on the spot.
And her Papa desired to know
Who was the master of the show?
But he, as afterwards transpired,
Had very modestly retired.
Then everyone had much ado
To bring Jane's fainting mother to:
At last she sat up with a start,
And pressed her darling to her heart.
"My Jane!" she cried, "my Jane!! my
Jane!!!"
And seemed inclined to faint again.

"Fainted on the spot"

"Tho' still more good, is still more plain"

When Jane regained her native hearth
She had a very thorough bath:
But tho' she used all soaps then known,
And soda too, and pumice-stone,
She sadly saw she still had got
More than one noticeable spot!
And so poor Miss Jemima Jane
Tho' still more good, is still more plain.